

# **2007 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey**

## **Risk Behaviors of Montana Youth with Feelings of Depression**

**Health Enhancement and Safety Division  
YRBS Program  
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### **The Concern**

While the picture of depression may differ from person to person, there are several common symptoms. Most people who are depressed feel sadness, describing themselves as feeling "miserable", "empty" or "hopeless", and report getting little if any pleasure from anything. Many also experience anxiety, anger, or agitation. Depressed people lose the desire to engage in everyday activities, and may have to force themselves to go to school or work, to talk to friends, eat meals, or have sex. Beck (1967) described this state as a "paralysis of will". Some may experience suicidal thoughts as a way of ultimately escaping their pain. They have lost the will to live, or see ending their lives as the only solution to their troubles.

Depressed people are usually less active and productive. They spend more time alone and may stay in bed for long periods. Insomnia, trouble falling asleep, or early wakening are common symptoms. Some experience hypersomnia, and feel that they can't get enough sleep, sometimes sleeping most of the day. People with depression may move and speak more slowly, with a lack of energy.

Finally, depressed people hold extremely negative views of themselves and their world, usually convinced that they will never improve and are helpless to change anything. They often feel that their intellectual abilities are poor; they feel confused, unable to remember things; they are easily distracted, and have difficulty solving even small problems. They may experience physical symptoms, such as increased headaches, indigestion, constipation, dizziness, muscle pain, and a change in appetite.

### **Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey**

The Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is administered by the Montana Office of Public Instruction every two years to high school and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. The purpose of the survey is to help monitor the prevalence of behaviors that not only influence youth health, but also put youth at risk for the most significant health and social problems that can occur during adolescence. While all schools in Montana can participate in the survey on a volunteer basis, approximately 50 high schools are randomly selected to be included with high schools from other states for national data and reports.

The 2007 YRBS was conducted in February of 2007 with 10,368 high school students. This represents approximately 22 percent of all high school students in Montana. Schools administering the survey were provided with detailed written instructions on conducting a random survey in their schools. To encourage accurate responses to sensitive questions, a strict protocol was implemented to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participating students.

### **Survey Validity**

Data used in this report from the 2007 YRBS are based on the weighted data obtained from a random sampling of schools and the participation of 4,030 students. The weighted results contained in this report can be used to make inferences about the priority health-risk behaviors of all high school students in grades 9 through 12 in Montana.

### **Report Results**

For the purpose of this report, youth reporting signs of depression are defined as survey participants who responded "Yes" to the question "During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?" Sixteen separate risk behaviors associated with violence, suicide, sexual behavior, tobacco use, alcohol use and other drug use, dietary behaviors and physical activity were investigated for association with depression among youth.

## Montana YRBS Quick Facts

During the 12 months preceding the survey:

- 25.8% of Montana students had felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities (17.7% males, 34.0% females)
- 15.1% of Montana students had seriously considered attempting suicide (11.0% males, 19.3% females)
- 13.2% of Montana students had made a plan about how they would attempt suicide (11.0% males, 15.4% females)
- 7.9% of Montana students had actually attempted suicide one or more times (5.7% males, 9.9% females)
- 2.7% of Montana students had made a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse (2.4% males, 3.1% females)

## Montana YRBS Findings

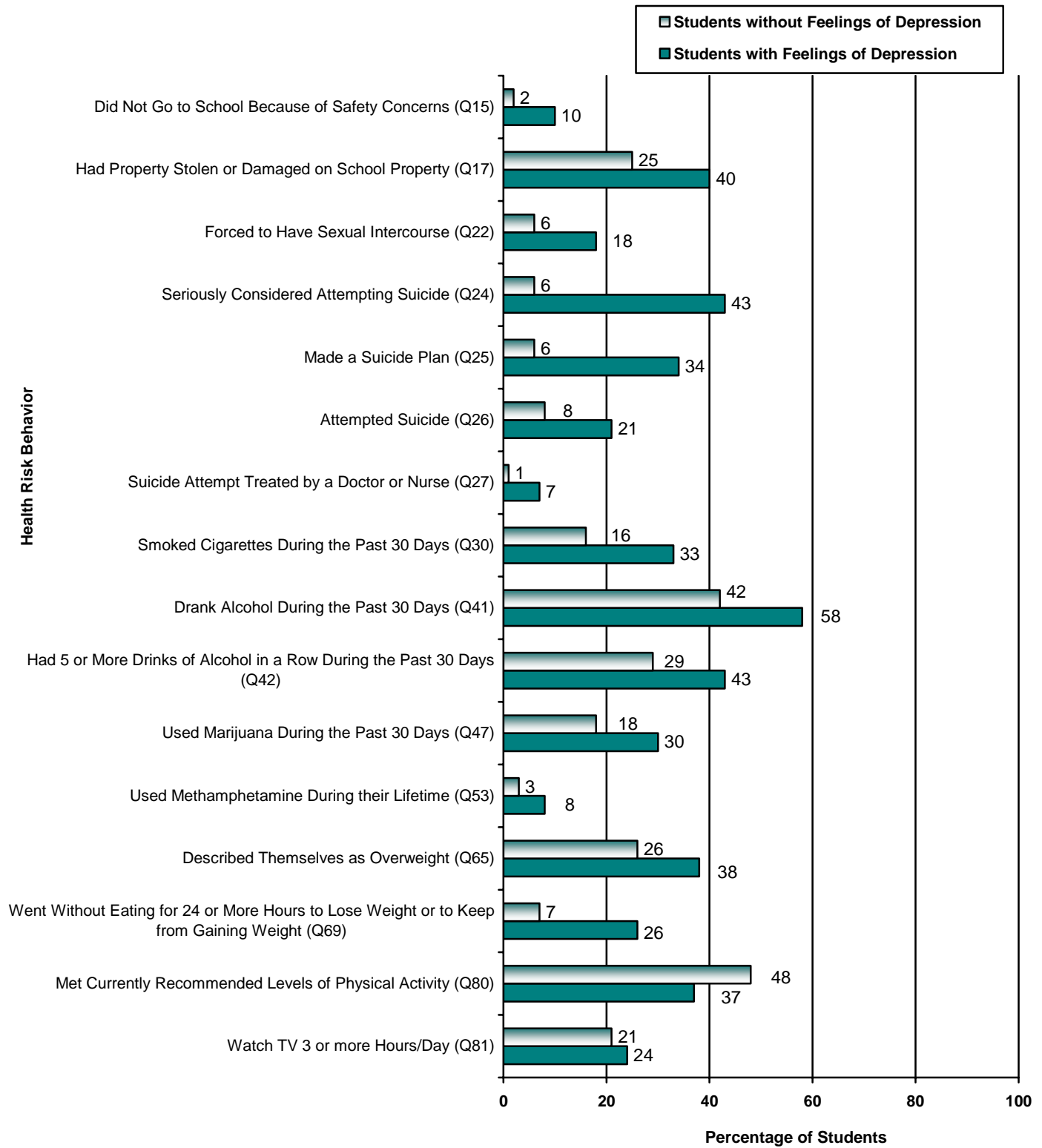
- Youth who report signs of depression are more likely than those youth who do not report signs of depression to not go to school on one or more of the past 30 days because they felt they would be unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. Ten percent of youth with symptoms of depression compared to 2% of youth without symptoms of depression did not go to school because they felt unsafe during the past 30 days.
- Montana high school students who felt sad or hopeless were more likely to have had property, such as their car, clothing, or books stolen or deliberately damaged on school property one or more times during the past 12 months. Forty percent of youth with sad/hopeless feelings compared to 25% of youth without sad/hopeless feelings have had their property damaged or stolen on school property during the past 12 months.
- Montana high school students who felt sad or hopeless were more likely than those students who were not sad or hopeless to have ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to. Forced sexual intercourse was reported by 18% of students with symptoms of depression compared to 6% of students who did not have symptoms of depression.
- Youth who reported signs of depression are more likely to have considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months than youth who did not report signs of depression. Forty-three percent of sad/hopeless youth and 5% of youth who were not sad/hopeless considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months.
- Youth who report signs of depression are more likely than their peers who did not report signs of depression to have made a plan about attempting suicide during the past 12 months. Thirty-four percent of Montana youth with signs of depression made a plan about attempting suicide compared to 6% of youth without signs of depression.
- Montana high school students who were sad/hopeless were more likely to have attempted suicide during the past 12 months than those youth who were not sad/hopeless. Twenty-one percent of youth with signs of depression (one in five) attempted suicide during the past 12 months, whereas, 8% of youth who did not have signs of depression attempted suicide.
- Suicide attempts resulting in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse were reported by 7% of youth showing signs of depression compared to 1% of youth who were without signs of depression.
- Montana high school students who felt sad or hopeless are more likely than their peers who did not feel sad or hopeless to have smoked cigarettes during the past 30 days. Thirty-three percent of high school students with signs of depression compared to 16% of students without signs of depression are current smokers.

- Youth who report signs of depression are more likely to have had a drink of alcohol during the past 30 days than youth who did not report signs of depression. Fifty-eight percent of sad or hopeless feeling youth currently use alcohol compared to 42% of youth who are not sad or hopeless feeling.
- Youth with signs of depression are more likely than their peers without signs of depression to have had 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row (binge drink) than youth who are not depressed. Forty-three percent of sad or hopeless feeling youth report binge drinking during the past 30 days compared to 29% of youth who were not sad or hopeless feeling.
- Youth with signs of depression are more likely to have used marijuana during the past 30 days than those youth without signs of depression. Thirty-one percent of sad or hopeless feeling youth and 18% of youth who were not sad or hopeless feeling are current marijuana users.
- Montana high school students who report feeling sad or hopeless are more likely to have used methamphetamine during their lifetime than those youth who report not feeling sad or hopeless. Methamphetamine use was reported by 8% of youth with signs of depression compared to 3% of youth without signs of depression.
- Youth who show signs of depression are more likely to describe themselves as slightly or very overweight than youth without signs of depression. Thirty-eight percent of youth reporting sad or hopeless feelings compared to 26% of youth not reporting sad or hopeless feelings described themselves as slightly or very overweight.
- High school students reporting sad or hopeless feelings are more likely than youth without sad or hopeless feelings to have gone without eating for 24 hours or more to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight during the past 30 days. Fasting was reported by 26% of youth with signs of depression compared to 7% of youth without signs of depression.
- Youth reporting signs of depression are less likely than those youth without signs of depression to be physically active for at least 60 minutes per day on five or more of the past seven days. Thirty-seven percent of sad or hopeless feeling high school students compared to 48% of students without sad or hopeless feelings were physically active at recommended daily levels.
- Watching TV for three or more hours on an average school day was just as likely among those high school students who were sad or hopeless (24%) when compared to those students who were not sad or hopeless (21%).

**2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey**  
**Students with Feelings of Depression vs. Students without Feelings of Depression**  
**Montana High School Students**

<b>Health Risk Behavior</b>	<b>Students with Feelings of Depression</b>	<b>Students without Feelings of Depression</b>
Did not go to school on one or more of the past 30 days because they felt they would be unsafe at school or on their way to or from school (Q15)	<b>10.2%</b> 7.7 – 12.7	<b>2.0%</b> 1.4 – 2.6
Had property stolen or deliberately damaged on school property during the past 12 months (Q17)	<b>40.1%</b> 36.3 – 43.9	<b>24.6%</b> 22.7 – 26.4
Were ever forced to have sexual intercourse (Q22)	<b>17.7%</b> 14.5 – 20.8	<b>5.6%</b> 4.7 – 6.6
Seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months (Q24)	<b>42.7%</b> 39.5 – 45.9	<b>5.5%</b> 4.6 – 6.4
Made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the past 12 months (Q25)	<b>33.9%</b> 29.0 – 38.9	<b>5.8%</b> 4.8 – 6.8
Actually attempted suicide during the past 12 months (Q26)	<b>20.6%</b> 17.4 – 23.8	<b>7.7%</b> 6.6 – 8.8
Had a suicide attempt during the past 12 months that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse (Q27)	<b>6.7%</b> 4.9 – 8.5	<b>1.2%</b> 0.8 – 1.6
Smoked cigarettes on one or more of the past 30 days (Q30)	<b>32.7%</b> 28.6 – 36.8	<b>15.7%</b> 12.9 – 18.5
Had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days (Q41)	<b>58.5%</b> 54.8 – 62.2	<b>42.2%</b> 39.2 – 45.2
Had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple hours (binge drink) (Q42)	<b>42.7%</b> 38.9 – 46.5	<b>29.3%</b> 26.5 – 32.1
Used marijuana one or more times during the past 30 days (Q47)	<b>30.4%</b> 26.4 – 34.4	<b>17.8%</b> 15.0 – 20.7
Used methamphetamines during their lifetime (Q53)	<b>8.4%</b> 6.3 – 10.5	<b>3.2%</b> 2.2 – 4.1
Describe themselves as slightly or very overweight (Q65)	<b>38.2%</b> 34.9 – 41.5	<b>26.1%</b> 24.1 – 28.0
Went without eating for 24 hours or more to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight during the past 30 days (Q69)	<b>26.3%</b> 23.9 – 28.7	<b>6.9%</b> 5.9 – 7.9
Were physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day on five or more of the past seven days (Q80)	<b>37.1%</b> 33.0 – 41.3	<b>47.6%</b> 44.4 – 50.7
Watch three or more hours per day of TV on an average school day (Q81)	<b>24.3%</b> 21.3 – 27.2	<b>21.4%</b> 19.2 – 23.6

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